

Stepping out of terrorism

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Stepping out of terrorism

Editorial

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The study of terrorism is hot. So many books are published, an alleged one every six hours, on radicalization, terrorism and how to combat it. There are reports by governments, NGOs and think tanks and special issues of academic journals in a variety of fields. Specialists publish in journals like *Perspectives on Terrorism* and *Terrorism and Political Violence*. Even though *Crime, Law and Social Change* has featured quite a few articles on the subject, it is still fair to say – as Gary LaFree [2] does – that on the whole the criminological study of terrorism has lagged far behind multifarious special branches of criminology. This special issue is not so much about the phenomenon itself as about how individual terrorists leave criminal organizations, groups, cells or just ‘bunches of guys’ as Sageman [3] describes their formations. How can governments or other institutions help or stimulate people to abandon crime and reintegrate them into society? These articles, inspired by and within the realm of criminology, deal with theory on crimes of conviction, desistance and measures of correction.

One of the first researchers to address radicalization and deradicalization in Europe was University of Amsterdam political scientist Frank J. Buijs. Immediately after Theo van Gogh was murdered on November 2, 2004 by Islamist fanatic Mohammed Bouyeri, Buijs and his staff started interviewing Islamic radical youngsters [3]. FORUM, the Dutch institute for multicultural problems, played an inspiring and very supportive role, institutionalizing and financing a special chair for Frank Buijs in Amsterdam. He unfortunately died unexpectedly in 2007. Frank Bovenkerk, criminology emeritus in Utrecht, was appointed to replace him. The University of Amsterdam welcomed him in April 2010 by organizing a small conference on deradicalization. This special issue of *Crime, Law and Social Change* is the fruit of this conference.

Frank Bovenkerk begins by comparing exit trajectories out of extremist organizations, organized crime such as the mafia, street gangs and sects. Then Tore Bjørgo, one of the main theorists in the field of deradicalization, refines deradicalization routes for various types of radicalization. Dechesne deals with social psychology theory to explain why governmental efforts to deradicalize rather than just disengage extremists may be effective. Dwyer and Maruna present the results of their recent study of self-help among Irish radicals on both sides to reintegrate into society. Then we go on to other criminal or secretive organizations. Amir notes that there is no such thing as aging out in (Israeli) organized crime and finds out what the elders actually do with their lives. Richardson presents a fascinating historical overview of deprogramming efforts to get people out of sects. This collection ends with a biography on terrorism by two of the outstanding specialists on terrorism, Alex Schmid and Eric Price. Criminologists who want to familiarize themselves with the field of terrorism will find this overview of the most relevant sources most helpful.

1. Buijs, F. J. (2009), ‘Muslims in the Netherlands: Social and Political Developments after 9 /11’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35 (3): 421-438.

2. LaFree, G. (2009), 'Criminology's Third War', *Criminology & Public Policy* 8 (3): 431-444.

3. Sageman, M. (2004), *Understanding Terror Networks*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.